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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001760

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2018

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: SETTLERS RIOT AND BURN OLIVE TREES IN RESPONSE TO
REMOVAL OF YAD YAIR

REF: JERUSALEM 1710

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Greg Marchese, per reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On September 18, in response to the IDF removal of structures at Yad Yair near Dolev settlement, north of Ramallah, settlers burned olive trees, hurled rocks, and blocked roads near Nablus, Ramallah, and Hebron. On September 19, Poloff saw an increased police and IDF presence near Ramallah and Nablus area settlements and some burnt olive trees, but could not verify the extent of the destruction. END SUMMARY.

IDF Actions: Yad Yair

¶2. (C) Press reported that IDF and Civil Administration officials removed a makeshift synagogue and several structures from Yad Yair (near Dolev settlement, north of Ramallah) on September 18. (Note: Yad Yair is the site of a former IDF outpost that settler youth use as a demonstration site. Several recent IDF attempts at removals have prompted settler attacks on the IDF (reftel). End Note.) Dolev settler and former Binyamin Regional Council Chairman Adi Mintz confirmed to Poloff the site's complete removal. He said settlers purchased the land at Yad Yair for a memorial to settler Yair Mendelson, who was killed during the first intifada. Mintz said one family and several youth lived at Yad Yair until September 18 and, in coordination with the Yesha Council, are pursuing legal action to reclaim the site. Settler outpost activist and Amcit Daniella Weiss condemned the IDF act as a "pogrom" on Israeli radio September 19 and pledged its rebuilding.

Nablus Area Settlers Respond

¶3. (C) In response to the removal at Yad Yair, Nablus area settlers set fire to olive trees between Yitzhar and the village of Madama and in Sura Village, near Havat Gilad outpost (both some 25 kilometers north of the Yad Yair site). (Note: The settlers were acting under their "new policy" to counter IDF actions against them (reftel). End Note.) Press report settlers hurled rocks at Palestinian homes and cars near Ramallah and at the Horesh Doron IDF base near Yad Yair and also blocked main roads across the West Bank. Poloff noted an increased Israeli police presence near settlements north of Ramallah and an increased IDF presence near settlements around Nablus September 19.

Extent of Damage to Olive Trees Unclear

¶4. (C) PA Civil Defense sources report that they extinguished fires that had destroyed some 300 trees and threatened 700 more near Sura village, and press reported

some 200 dunams of olive trees burned near Madama. However, Poloff could not verify such extensive damage on visits to the West Bank. Rabbis for Human Rights director Rabbi Arik Ascherman confirmed a fire destroyed some 10 trees and severely damaged another 20-30 trees in Madama September 18; he personally extinguished the fire. He noted that the IDF prevented Palestinian firefighters from accessing the scene.

MARCHESE